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Reach, Angus B.

The natural history of "bores"

London

1847

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Control Number: BCX-7678
OCLC Number : 03753961
Call number: W PN970 .E5 NATURx
Author : Reach, Angus B. (Angus Bethune), 1821-1856.
Title : The natural history of "bores" / by Angus B. Reach ; illustrated by H.G. Hine.
Edition : 3rd ed.
Imprint : London : D. Bogue, 1847.
Format : 112, [16] p. : ill. ; 14 cm.
Note : Publisher's advertisements on p. [1]-[16] at end.
Subject : Chapbooks, English.
Added Entry : Hine, Henry George, 1811-1895.

MICROFILMED BY
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Film Size: 35mm microfilm
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Reduction Ratio: 8:1
Date filming began: 6|29|94
Camera Operator: CC

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THE NATURAL HISTORY

OF

"BORES."

BY ANGUS B. REACH.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON: D. BOGUE, FLEET STREET.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

T. C. SAVILL, PRINTER, CHANDOS STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

JOHN
GRISWOLD WHITE
COLLECTION OF
FOLKLORE,
ORIENTALIA
AND CHESS.

A GIFT TO THE
CLEVELAND
PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Another sort of Bore, just as tiresome and more offensive, haunts the upper boxes at half price. The creatures make their appearance in threes and fours, and their peculiarity consists in talking rapid slangy nonsense to each other, as loud as the actors on the stage"

THE NATURAL HISTORY

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ILLUSTRATED BY H. G. HINE

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MDCCC XLVII.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS CHOATE HAVILL,
4, CHANDOS STREET

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PREFACE

AUG 3 0 1923

We have but two words to say to two classes —Critics and Readers.

These are essentially different. There are, first, the gentlemen who criticise without

reading; and secondly, the gentlemen who read without criticising.

The former, of course, are very fond of a smart opening sentence. So be it. We only prohibit—by anticipating them—the use of any of the following forms of judgment:

"'THE NATURAL HISTORY OF BORES' includes many nuisances, but decidedly the greatest is reading their enumeration."

"'THE NATURAL HISTORY OF BORES.' To be complete, it ought to have given a Memoir of the Author."

"'THE NATURAL HISTORY OF BORES,' we take to be an account of the species to which the ingenious writer belongs."

And so forth. Critics are respectfully informed that the use of any sentence similar to the above, will be gross plagiarism, which for their own sakes they had better avoid.

And now, Reader, don't be afraid of open-

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ing the book and finding your own portrait staring you in the face. But—this in your ear — *all your neighbours are there!* The peculiarity of satire is, that it forms a mirror in which every one may see his friend's face, but none his own.

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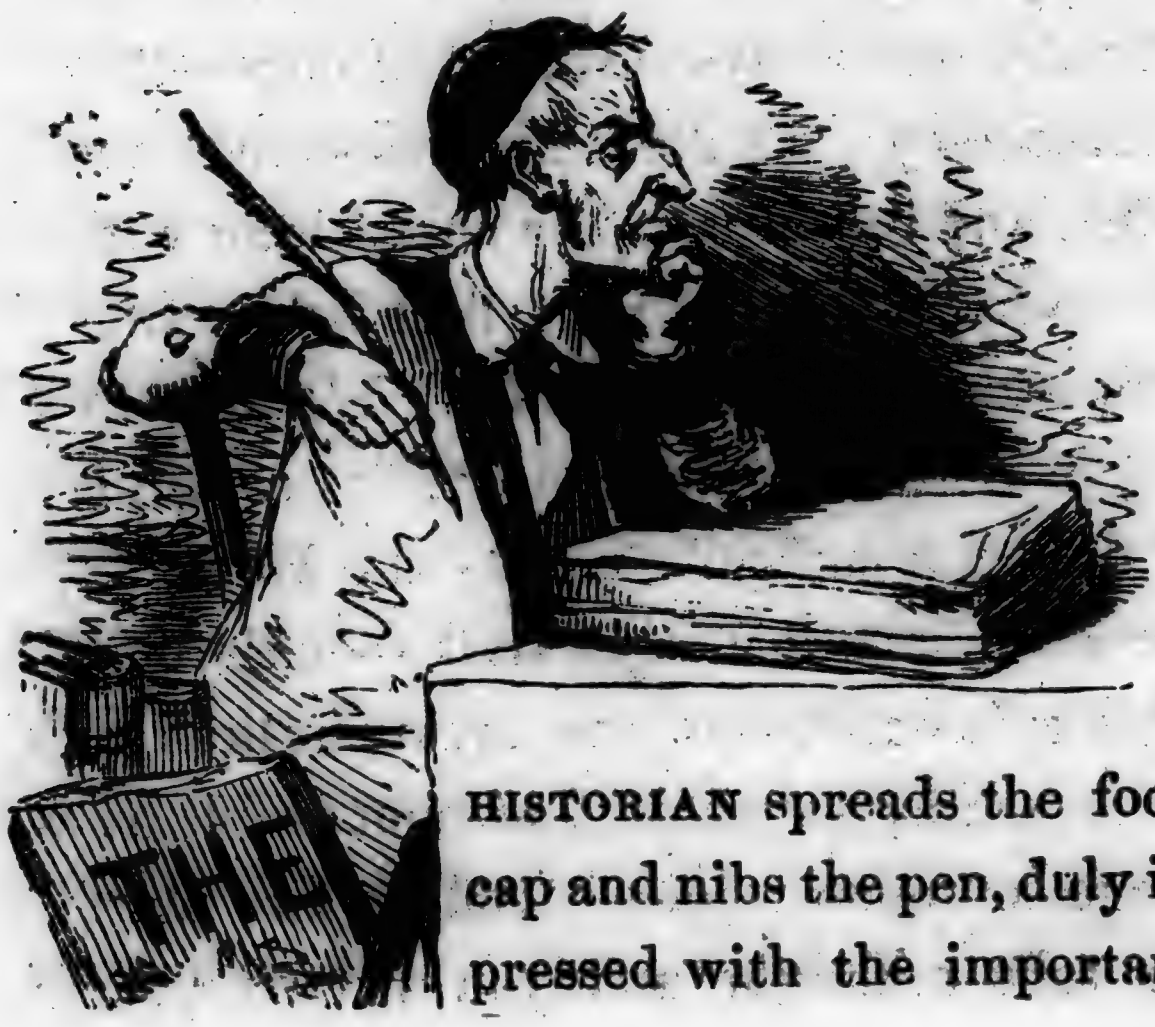
THE NATURAL HISTORY

OF

"BORES."

CHAPTER I.



HISTORIAN spreads the foolscap and nibs the pen, duly impressed with the importance

and the magnitude of the toil before him. Vast is the family, awful the influence, of the "Bores." Were we to contemplate a work on the Natural History of the Wits or the Sages, how short and simple the task—because how few the specimens. But the Bores—the race is all-pervading, infinite, endless. No; it is neither the aristocracy, nor the democracy, nor the shopocracy, nor the mobocracy which rules and sways this land of ours—it is the boreocracy. Take the respected ten pounders and upwards—pass an evening with each. What would be your first words after emancipation from the honour? Would they not be, "What a frightful Bore!" And this proof does not suffice? Go to the House of Commons. Listen to a night's talk—on the currency, for instance—to the drear, unbroken, Lethé of words, in which that honourable assemblage so much rejoices, and as St. Margaret's tolls midnight, and you stretch your

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free limbs in the outside air, with what gusto the ejaculation will escape, "What an awful Bore!"

We are, then, a Bore-ridden people. Bores are everywhere. In the street—in the drawing-room—in the boudoir—in the two pair back—are Bores. Go up in the Nassau Balloon, and three to one, you are sitting—a mile above the earth—with a Bore. Plump down in the Polytechnic diving bell, and the odds are as great, that you are cheek by jowl with an animal of the same species. You can't fly them. Forswear mankind. Take a hermitage—or, better still, ensconce yourself in the pay box of a theatre devoted to the legitimate and the high-art drama—shut yourself up, in fact, in any hole, into which the human face divine never peeps, and still you have not shaken off the influence of Boredom. Still it haunts you—persecutes you. Stay alone for a bare half hour, and how great is the chance that your own thoughts, your own mental self, becomes to that self—a Bore.

But it may be asked—"Would you, then,

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suppress Bores?" Heavens, reader! do you take us for a second Herod, thus to suggest a new massacre of the innocents? Exterminate the Bores, indeed! We love our race, our friends, our acquaintances, our brothers and sisters of mankind, better. Exterminate the Bores! Put an extinguisher on so worthy a proportion of the good souls of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Berwick-upon-Tweed!

Reader! we are not Nero.

Exterminate the Bores indeed! What! when we have friends who write severely classic tragedies; and furthermore, who come to read the MS. to us—and friends who ask us out to breakfast, in remote and uncivilized suburbs—and friends who perform amateur plays and get up amateur concerts—and friends who paint awfully high-art pictures on heroic subjects—and friends who will talk metaphysics after the fifth tumbler—and primitive and normal friends, who lament the

days of the fine old sentimental sterling comedies—and sporting friends whose souls are in the odds—and old-fashioned friends who believe that Addison would get anybody now-a-days to publish the Spectator—and unpleasant friends who give evening parties without suppers—and philoprogenitive friends who introduce Bill to spout "Romans, countrymen, and lovers," after dinner, and who throw out oblique insinuations because we never take a hint to kiss the baby—and dreary friends who tell stories without end, and, therefore, necessarily without point — and many other kinds and degrees of friends, loved and venerated for sundry similar reasons. Exterminate the Bores forsooth! It would be as reasonable to take the black keys out of the pianoforte!

Conceive society without "Bores." Why, who in that case would write the fashionable novels—or paint the portraits of Prince Albert

—or design public buildings for the metropolis —or make patriotic speeches in vestries—or get up subscriptions for sending out spelling-books or warming-pans to the Ashantees—or talk about the British lion and the un-English practices of foreigners—or do the thousand-and-one things which have made Great Britain the envy of surrounding nations, and the pride and wonder of the world?

No, may the Bores ever flourish. We know them, and love them, and make much of them. Here we stand on the very threshold of Boredom. We are about to introduce its inhabitants to each other—to the outside world. May the treatise be as eternal as its subject. For Bores live in all generations—survive all changes. The spirit is perpetuated. It is as in the palmy days of the stately old French court. A Bore dies.

And the Hand of Destiny snaps the wand, and flourishes a new one. While the Voice of

Necessity proclaims, "The Bore is dead. Long live the Bore!"

CHAPTER II

SOME ANCIENT BORES.

WITH a fine notion of what philosophers call the fitness of things, we like to begin at the beginning, and to consider the Bore, not only as he appears in paletot and wellingtons, but as he must have figured in the classic times, when the Greeks besieged

a city, and made war upon a nation—apropos of a little Doctors' Commons job,—and in those later ages when the "Lays of Ancient Rome," if they ever had any actual prototypes, would have been cried through the streets of the seven-hilled city at three yards for an obolus.

Now the ancients swarmed with Bores. Even the gods and goddesses of our friends the Greeks and Romans were a wofully dreary set, who appear to have had nothing else to do than to get up very unpleasant and improper scenes on Mount Olympus, and to sit upon clouds watching the fighting which was going on amongst humanity below, and occasionally coming to the rescue—just as a policeman pops upon a street row. Momus had the general charge of the comic business, but judging from some of his jokes, we have no hesitation in putting him down—considering his pretensions—as a Bore of the first magnitude. Minerva must have also been horribly soporific, and we have often thought what an intense

Bore Telemachus must have found her when she was be-speechifying him as Mentor. Æneas was a fine specimen of the milk-and-water Bore; and Lycurgus, of black broth memory, must also be put down as a distinguished member of the same family, and a thorough snob to boot. It is all very well to talk of Spartan virtue and purity, but our private opinion of the people in question is, that they were a set of braggarts and bullies, who pretended to scorn refinement because they had not sense enough to value its advantages; and who, in a state of demi-civilization, were continually aspiring to be savages. As to their morals, we are sorry to say that they looked upon petty larceny in the light of an elegant accomplishment, and probably boasted of educational establishments, where, instead of "reading, writing, arithmetic, and the use of the globes," they taught "stealing, swindling, housebreaking, and the use of the crowbar."

The Athenian philosophers, when they lectured in the Gymnasium, — which seems to have been a classic species of Hyde Park,— must also have been thought Bores by the policemen of the period, who would probably, while he was sermonizing to Alcibiades, have addressed Socrates somewhat in this fashion: "Now then, old gentleman, move on. Can't allow you to collect a crowd here."

Sappho—by the way, we wonder if her portrait was ever given away with some ancient Greek newspaper—must have been a great Bore to her friends, as, instead of making herself generally useful about the house, she was in the habit of blue-stockingizing to an awful extent, and falling in love with all the eligible young men in the neighbourhood. This young lady seems to have been the first of the poetesses, and the dinner we had the other day at the house of a friend, whose wife writes addresses to daffydowndillies and lines on dead doves, made us wish that she had also been the last.

The Romans, notwithstanding their having built common sewers through which you might drive four-in-hand,—although really the selection of such a route for an airing is not what we would have made ourselves,—and notwithstanding their having undoubtedly been the champions of the world, in that great prize-ring formed by the equator, must still have been,

socially, a slow people, with an immense proportion of Bores.

In the early days of the republic, the number of "virtuous heavy fathers" was, no doubt, very considerable, while we cannot but be of opinion that there was a large amount of twaddle and boreism about the notion of Cincinnatus stepping from the plough to the supreme power. Considering his agricultural pursuits, he must have known more of 'taturship than dictatorship. At all events, we should not think now-a-days of choosing a prime minister from the respected class of gentlemen who wear smock-frocks, swing on gates, and chew bacon. By the way, talking of Roman statesmen, the *Delenda est Carthago* old gentleman must have been an awful Bore in the senate. He was probably a sort of Joseph Hume in a toga. Cæsar, too, was a good bit of a Bore, especially to the nations he would always keep pitching into, and afterwards to the senate, a select committee

of whom favoured him with a piece of their mind, practically demonstrated, upon the subject. The real cause, however, of the conspiracy set on foot by Brutus and Cassius was —although the fact is not generally known—a tiresome habit of Cæsar's of asking his friends home, to read the MS. of his Commentaries to them. Brutus and Cassius at last vowed that flesh and blood could stand it no longer, particularly as Cæsar never offered them anything for supper — a fact which perfectly accounts for Shakspeare's allusion to the "lean and hungry" aspect of the lanky Cassius.

As to the every day doings of the Romans, we should have thought it a decided Bore to have been present at one of the remarkably oddly composed dinners we read of, and afterwards to have sat out one of Seneca's tragedies.

If they liked it, however, that was another thing. Our motive for having flung back a glance at the days of old, when the tug of war resulted from Greek meeting Greek,—a state of things, by the way, which must have given ample employment to the Athenian and Lacedemonian police—and to the more recent times when the civilization of Rome reached its height, by the introduction of oyster stalls, for the sale of genuine natives in the Forum, —was merely to prove how ancient is the honourable house of Bores.

Our classical retrospect over, we jump, clearing the middle ages at one bound, right into our own times, our own manners, our own society, and our own Bores.

CHAPTER III.

OF PRIVILEGED BORES.

IT is quite a mistake to suppose that every one has a right to be a Bore.

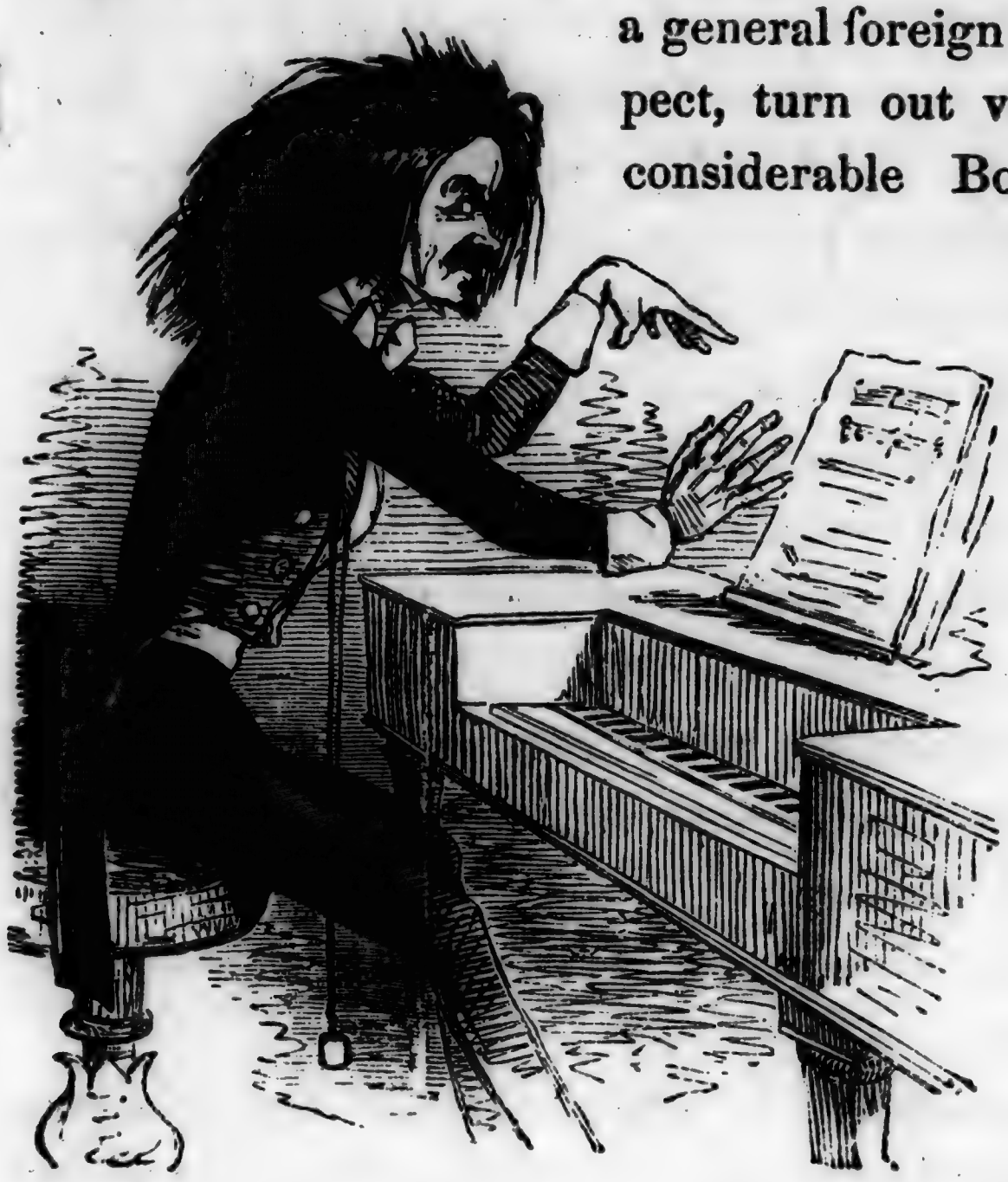
There, reader, is your uncle—your venerable cross, peevish bilious, charming uncle — with a large balance at the right side of his account with Coutts. He comes to dine with you, and quarrels with every thing on the table. He almost drives your wife wild by hinting

that your eldest will have a snub nose and carroty locks. After a few glasses of wine have thawed him, he becomes simply tedious. He tells awful stories of the quarrels and diplomatic negotiations he carries on with his neighbour Brown, about Brown's dog, which has a habit of amusing himself by the monotonous recreation of howling all night in the back yard. You hear about Brown's dog every time you see your uncle. His very soul is embarked in the contest with Brown's dog. Brown's dog is a nightmare on your spirits, a stumbling-block in your way, an abomination in your nostrils; and in the agonies of your pent-up wrath you inwardly pray that Brown's dog may catch the hydrophobia, bite mankind in general, and your venerated relation in particular.

But do you breathe a word of the secret of your soul to the delightful good old gentleman himself? Not you. You console yourself by abusing him to your wife at night. He is

one of the privileged Bores, and his strength lies in his purse-strings.

We have known musical gentlemen, with very long hair and a general foreign aspect, turn out very considerable Bores



at the party they were invited to enliven. The professor sits down to the pianoforte—dead silence is proclaimed. A shock, as if an eagle had swooped down on the keys—and away he goes full tilt into a short piece of sixty pages. You have been flirting with the pretty Miss Laura Chickabiddy, and you whisper—"I suppose if they get an author here they make him read his book on the same principle!"

The pianist catches your eye and Miss Chickabiddy's smile, and scowls like a melo-dramatist writing a thrilling passage.

The infliction over, your hostess swims up to you.

"Naughty thing that you are, don't you know how very particular the signor is when he is playing?"

In other words, the signor is a privileged Bore.

A knight, in a good state of preservation, would have some title to be a Bore in a party

of plain Misters and Missuses. A baronet's claim could not well be disputed, while, of course, a lord would have it all his own way. Everybody would laugh at his jokes, agree with his observations, and quite coincide in his opinion of Jenny Lind.

Amongst plain every-day folks, then, a lord is a privileged Bore. We don't mean to say that he always is one, but simply, that if he likes he may.

We have known professed funny gentlemen, too, with no inconsiderable snatch of the privileged Bore. Quizley is an example. He can make a pun on anything. He is asked out to be witty, and as he is very conscientious, he never leaves off——trying

Jobson is the great chemist. You are pleased to meet him, and somehow get into a semi-scientific chat together. Quizley comes up.

"You talk of the effects of acid. What Cid? Racine's Cid?"

You groan at the attempt, and Jobson stalks off in the sulks. Never mind, you fix on Flint—Flint, so well known as a geologist. Up comes Quizley.

"What's that you were saying of Felt-spar? Ha! you should have seen the Tipton Slasher spar."

You are inclined to be cross. Nonsense Quizley is a privileged Bore.

Practical joking men are even greater nuisances than your mere word-catchers. Look at Driblet. He puts powder into your pipe, knocks you up at five in the morning by a false alarm of fire, sends thirteen pianoforte-men, with thirteen pianos, and eight under-takers, with as many coffins, to your lodgings.

You threaten to kick Driblet. "Nonsense," everybody will say; "nobody is angry at what Driblet does. Absurd!"

And so, through an endless number of instances, society, under certain circumstances,

is always ready to tolerate a certain species of Boredom.

There is the Dowager Lady Sally Lunn, who makes no scruple of telling you to your face that you are a particularly disagreeable personage. "Oh," but says the world, "she is so sincere; no nasty flattery about dear Lady Sally; and besides, whatever she says is for your own good, if you would only take it so.

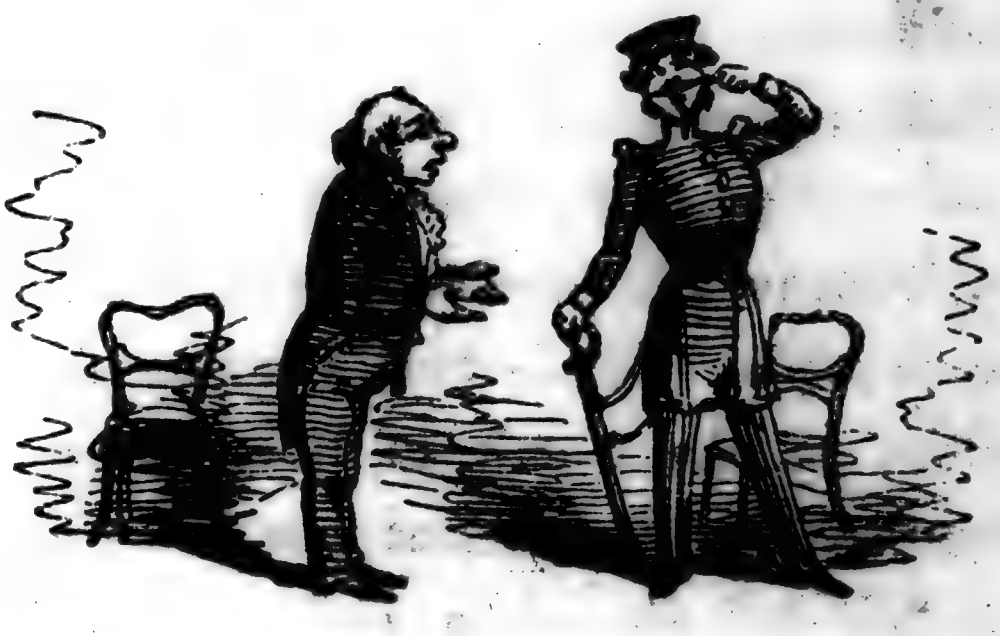
Mr. Wormwood Scrubbs has been a month in the Guards. He is entitled, therefore, to dogmatize on the Battle of Sobraon; and if you venture to differ, to put you down with a sneer, "What should a civilian know of military matters?"

So of Mr. Horatio Splice, a coal merchant in the city, and the owner of the Fly-by-Night cutter yacht, of five tons register.* He makes perilous expeditions in what he calls his "hard-a-weather craft" to Gravesend. Is he

* Query.—Why have all city coal-merchants yachts?

not, therefore, the supreme authority on everything nautical, from Noah down to Mr. T. P. Cooke?

Bores all—privileged Bores all



CHAPTER IV.

ON STORY-TELLING BORES.

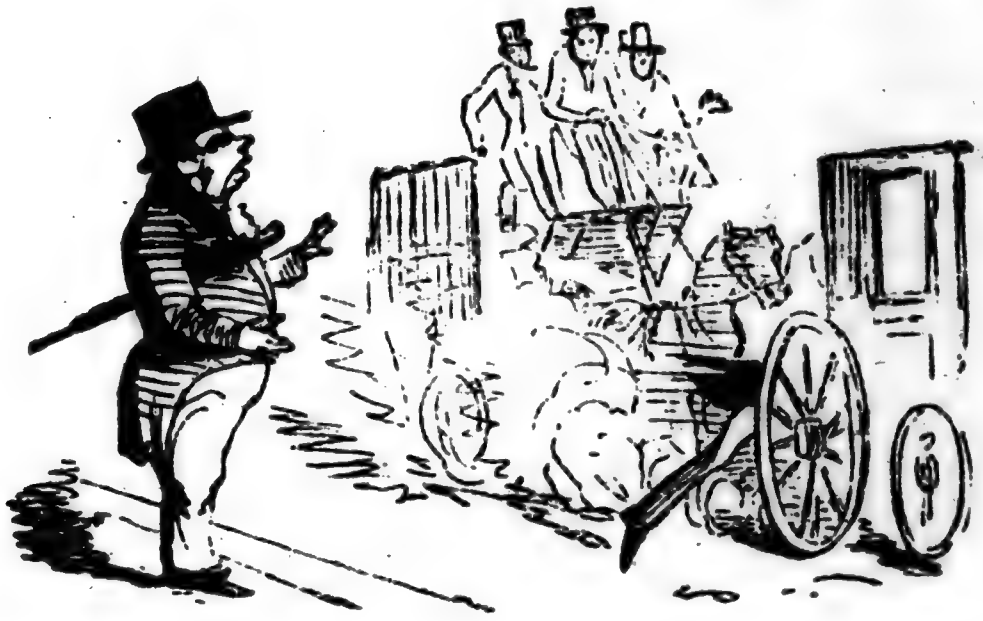
THE story-telling Bore flourishes in all communities with considerable vigour, and he is decidedly one of the most dreary and hopeless of the whole species. The story-telling Bore is the modern old man of the sea. He singles you out for attack, fixes on you like a leech, and very frequently succeeds in making you his exclusive property for the evening, in

which case he exercises his rights in the most tyrannical manner, scrupling not to do as he likes with his own.

A bold effort in the outset may sometimes disconcert and shake off the enemy. Thus, a friend of ours, sauntering down Regent-street, was attacked by a story-telling Bore, who hooked on, as these animals have a habit of doing, to his button-hole.

"Anything going on?" drawled the Bore, an insidious leading up to one of his own narrations—"anything going on?"

"Yes," retorted the victim, "I am—;" and



bursting off, he darted amid half-a-dozen cabs and omnibuses to the opposite pavement.

He risked his life, but he smashed the Bore.

The peculiarity of the stories enunciated by the species of Bore under consideration, is, that they never have any end to speak of; that they are hooked together by the most bewildering stitches of "says I's" and "says he's," linking all manner of parenthetical impertinences; that they seldom relate to any subject other than the personal grievances of the narrator, and that the only notice required to be taken of them by the unhappy listener, is, the utterance of a connected series of "oh's," "ah's," "I see's," and "you don't say so's."

Take a sample.

"Well, then, who should come in but Bubkins; and says he—you know Bubkins, of course? Well, then, he says, Bubkins I mean, it's not often, says he, that I interfere; and, to do him justice, it is not—for he's

not a bad fellow, Bubkins, in his own way, and nobody who knows him can say otherwise. However, that is not what I was going to say. Let me see, where was I? Up Bubkins came. Well, then, says he, 'Grubble,' says he, 'you are an ill-used man. To think what you have done for that family, and Heaven knows, though I say it, that should not say it, it's true, every word of it.' So, says he—that is—yes, exactly—you know, of course. Ah! yes, I have it; Bubkins came—Well, as I was telling you, says Bubkins, says he—"

&c., &c., &c., &c., &c.

The story-telling Bore is very fond of giving luminous accounts of the plots of new pieces at the theatres. This is, without exception, the most awful infliction of any. We would rather have a back tooth out any day, than listen to Grubble's details of the 'ins and outs' of the last new farce at the Haymarket. It goes in this wise:—

"Ah, it was very funny. You know—first there was Webster. Well, Webster is

an old—sort of—odd—what you may call it—kind of——No; it's Buckstone that's that—Buckstone. Well, then, his name is Pluffer—John Pluffer—no; Peter Pluffer—it does not signify—and so—Pluffer—that's Farren

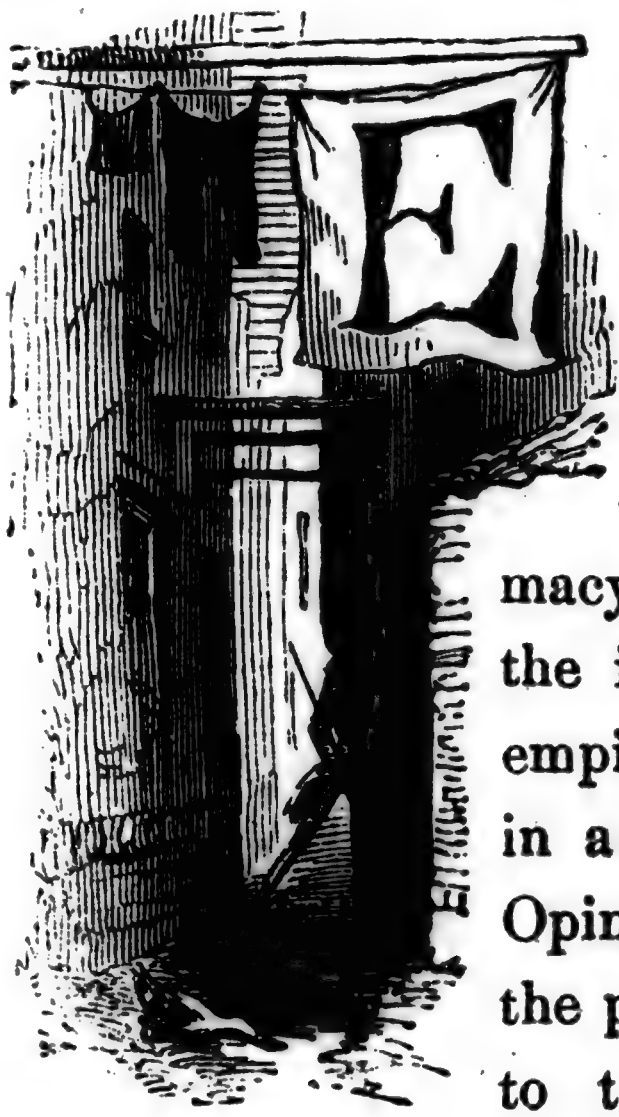
—no—Buckstone—comes in—and says—oh, a lot of such things—fit to make you die of laughing—about—about—you must go to see it—you must. Well, then, next Farren comes in—no; he's discovered in his house—and he has a daughter—no—yes—yes—a daughter that's secretly married to Miss Trotter—that's Miss Fortescue—no; what am I saying—how absurd to be sure—Miss Trotter is Miss Julia Bennet. But its old Jorum's son—not his daughter—that's privately married to Miss Trotter—Julia Bennet you know—without Buckstone's knowledge. So that you see—when Tilbury—no, not Tilbury—Clark—who's an old—what do you call it—of Jorum's—no—yes—to be sure—of Jorum—that's Farren, you know—an old steward—well, when he comes in, who should be there but Pluffer—you can't imagine how droll it is—in a cupboard—hid, you know. Gad, Buckstone was so good there. However—there's then

such a confusion, of course, because Pluffer's niece—no, Jorum's daughter—is jealous of Buckstone; and then in comes Holl, who has been at sea—and then the forging of the will——Oh, I forgot—I ought to have told you there was a—what do you call it—a will—forged; but through the lawyer—he's Farren—no, Webster—him I told you of at first you know—it's found out—by Pluffer in the cupboard—so, of course, it all comes right, and Miss Trotter is married to Holl. It was capital—I never laughed so much in my life."

Reader; we hope you will do as much.

CHAPTER V

SOME ACCOUNT OF A BORE OF PRETENSIONS.



EDWARD DE SMYTHE SMITH SMYTHERE3 is a clerk in a government office. His duties consist either in managing the high diplomacy of Europe, regulating the internal affairs of this empire, or copying letters in a clear half text hand. Opinions are divided upon the point. Our own leans to the latter alternative.

But whatever Mr. E. De Smythe Smith Smytheres may be in Downing-street, he is intensely magnificent in Regent-street. He is a man of great grandeur, and passes his life in being dignified. He is never seen except in the season. When front window blinds are drawn down in Belgravia, and footmen's knocks are hushed in May Fair, he is still in town, but invisible. You might as well look for a bat in a November fog. Mr. E. De S. S. Smytheres is, in fact, a man of resource—and he has explored a south-eastern passage from his abode, in a locality somewhat between a lane and a mews, turning out of Curzon-street, whereby he can make, barring a hazardous bolt across Piccadilly, a quiet and prosperous passage from his rooms to his office, without once straying from the tortuous labyrinth of back lanes and alleys, through which he continues to steer from one end of the journey to the other.

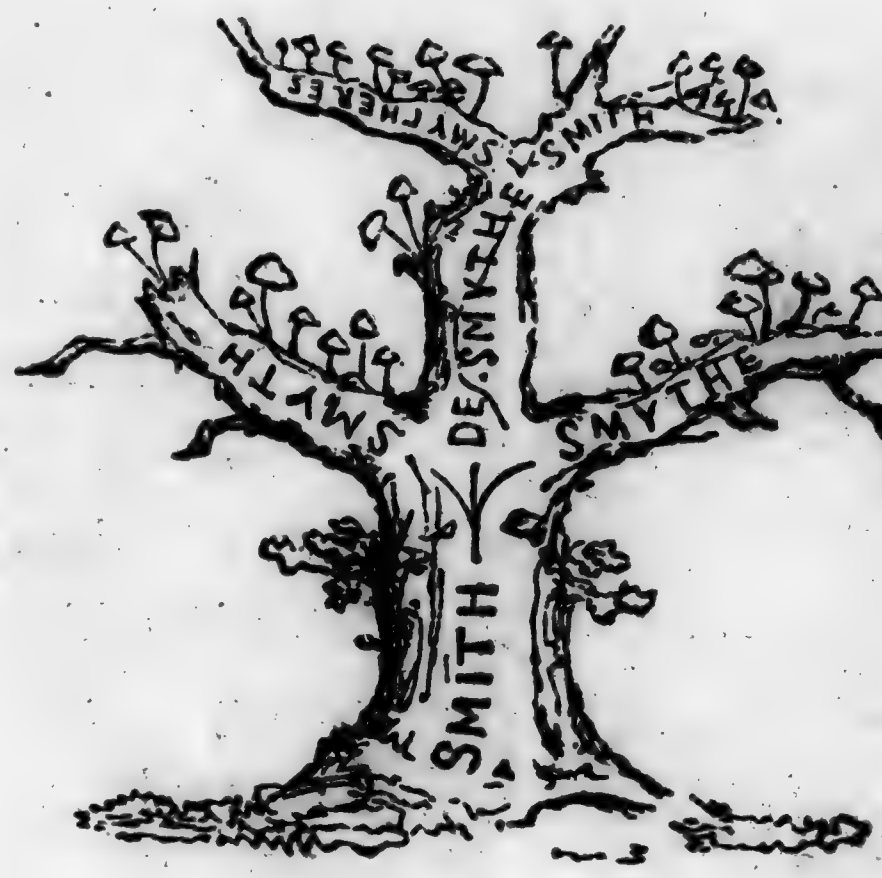
From this feat may be inferred the desperate energy with which Mr. E. De S. S. Smytheres pursues the prodigiously genteel. His lodgings are his "chambers"—his landlady is his "laundress." He won't get into a Hansom because "it is so exposed." He was thrice in an omnibus, but felt ill after the infliction. He is a hunter of tufts. He knows the peerage by heart, and has a smattering of heraldry. Not a carriage can roll along Bond-street, the occupants of which he will not name to you. He knows women in the Ballet, and men in the Guards. He calls four-horse coaches "drags." He affects green-rooms, where actors sneer at him, and authors quiz him. Happily, he never knows when he is laughed at.

We had occasion to call on Mr. E. De S. S. Smytheres the other day. His room was one cloud of perfume. A plated tray of cards

lay on the table. They were put there to be shown, so we looked at them. All the "Lord John's" and "Hon. Mr.'s" were laid on the top, like the biggest strawberries, which give such a tempting *prima facie* look to the pottle. The dignified gentleman condescendingly accompanied us some short distance eastwards. His talk was a slangy court circular. He knew nothing out of "society," and as we had not the honour of the acquaintance of the "De Brook girls," or the "Evelyn set," or any knowledge of the "Hon. Fred. Rooke, and Villefranque of the Guards, who had the *eclaircissement* about Isoline Guinguette of the St. James's," we were unhappily precluded from taking much interest in the valuable facts communicated to us. After some twenty minutes' infliction, and a reprimand for the vulgarity of stopping to look at the last caricature of Gavarni in a print shop

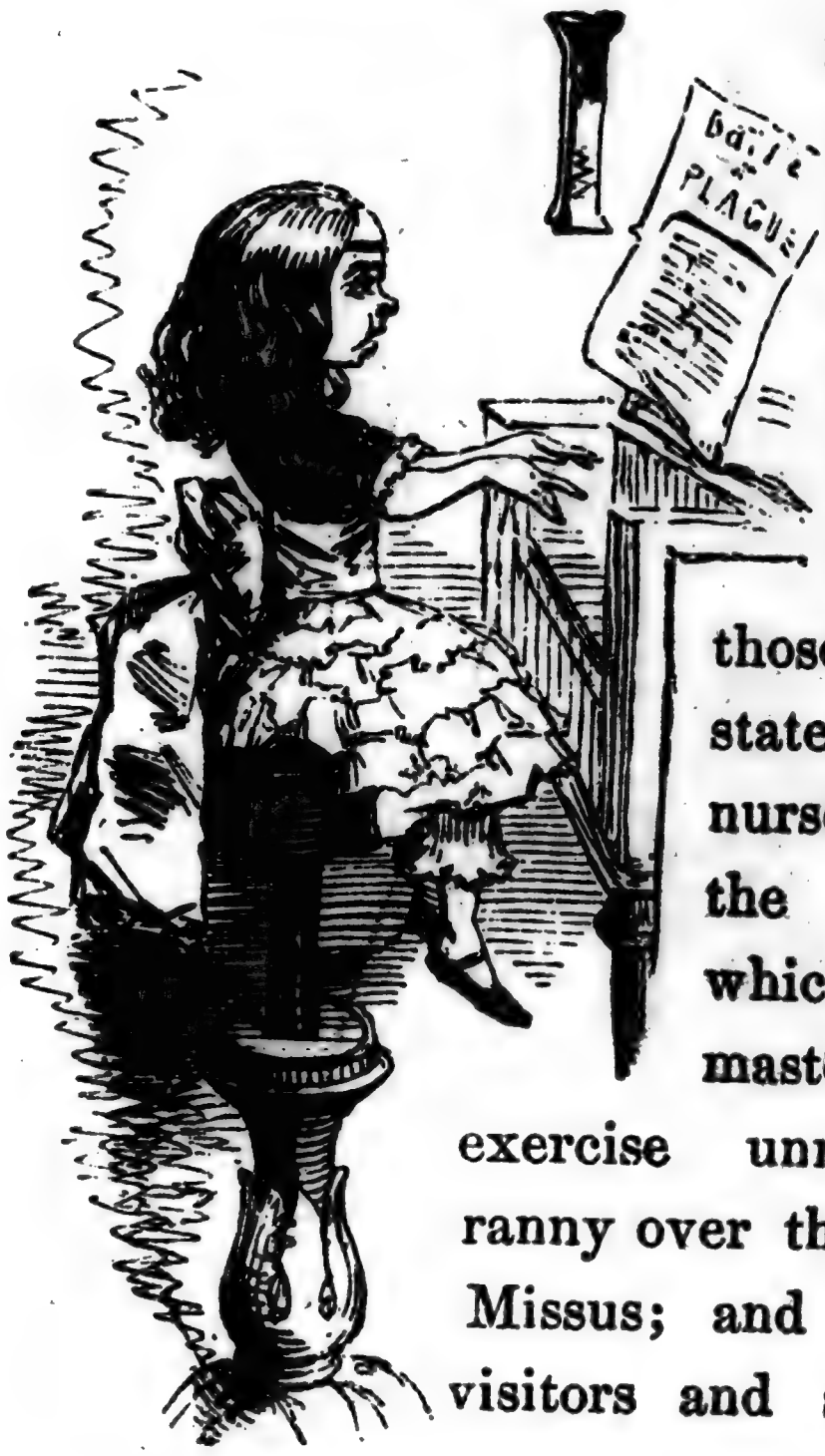
window, Mr. Edward De Smythe Smith Smytheres could no longer endure our conduct in calling another halt, to gaze at a certain small

itinerant theatre. He therefore stalked off alone in his glory—and we stayed from the first squeak of Punch to the last.



CHAPTER VI.

ON PHILOPROGENITIVE BOREISM.



N most of the domiciles of her Majesty's subjects there is a nursery. We have now to do with those domestic states in which the nursery governs the parlour, in which the little masters and misses exercise unrelenting tyranny over the Mister and Missus; and in which all visitors and strangers are

forced to do homage to the juvenile oligarchy of the lollipop and the go-cart.

If you pay a forenoon's visit to one of these formidable habitations, your rat-ta-tat from without will be responded to by a loud series of screams from within. You enter—there

is a perfect inundation of babies about the house. The nursery has overflowed, and its contents are sprawling on staircase and lobby. The parlour will be found littered with toys. Johnny and Sukey will be seated on the rug, fighting for the last morsel of Gibraltar rock. Ned will be crying in the corner, where he has been deposited, with a fool's cap, on account of naughtiness. Sarah Jane, and Alick, (the twins,) will be howling out, in the true infant school recitative, a lesson from the works of the immortal lyric poet, Watts, beginning—

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite—"

while mamma, in morning gown and curl papers, will be dressing Petsey, rocking Baby Bib's cradle, teaching Sarah Jane and Alick, scolding Ned, and screaming to Johnny and Sukey to hold their tongues, all in a breath.

The call—a very short one—over, the un-

happy visitor is dismissed; his mind improved by the reception of the following important truths:—to wit,

1st. That Charles is to have the first prize in the second Reading and English Grammar class.

2nd. That Annie got four good marks for French since Thursday.

3rd. That Polly had her ears bored last week, and is to begin the piano next quarter.

4th. That Peter is a bad boy, has broken three squares of glass, and won't take his physic.

5th. That Sarah Jane and Alick (the twins) can read words of two syllables, and have thirteen hymns by heart, each.

6th. That Johnny and Sukey go out every day with Susan in the park; but although the season is so warm, they have not yet left off flannel.

7th. That Ned is such a cross child, you can't think.

8th. That Petsey suffers so much, poor darling, from teething.

9th. And that baby Bib was vaccinated on Saturday, when it was the opinion of the doctor that he was, without exception, the finest child he ever saw—and the image of his father.

A dinner party at a house of this class is not to be lightly ventured. It will be a mercy if you have not the whole of the infantry, rank and file, perched on little chairs, with little knives and forks—screaming, now for beef, anon for pudding—making grabs at the dishes with their little soft greasy paws; and being ultimately removed per force to the nursery on account of undutiful conduct, and re-introduced upon promises of amendment—all through dinner time. If the Bore of Philoprogenitiveness has not gone to such an awful length as this, still you will assuredly be deluged by the juvenile flood the moment the cloth is withdrawn. Then comes the grand

exhibition of the children, considered as works of art. First Susan carries round the baby to be kissed. This melancholy rite performed, the elder olive branches will crave attention. Peter, Alick, Johnny, and Ned will drink to the healths of the company individually, and seriatim, in half glasses of port. Thus—

Peter. { Please, Mr. Brown, your good health.
Please, Mr. Jones, your good health.
Please, Mr. Smith, your good health.
&c. &c. &c.

And so on by the other juveniles in turn.

A little scholastic fête is next provided for the delectation of the guests.

"You'll be astonished," says the papa, "at the progress Peter makes in English history. Peter, listen—By whom was the Spanish Armada defeated?"

Answer, very promptly—"By John of Gaunt."

Dismissal of Peter with disgrace to bed.

"Ah, but," says papa, "there's Johnny now—that child's aptitude for arithmetic is really a very curious thing. Johnny, come here, my boy? What's six times ten?"

Answer, in a loud sing-song style—

"Six times nine is fifty-four, and six times ten make sixty."

Johnny is instantly rewarded with another half glass of wine.

Examination resumed.

"And if I buy a herring and a half"—

&c. &c. &c.

The girls principally figure in the drawing-room, under the direction of mamma. Annie's pianoforte proficiency forms a great card for that estimable lady; but it is not until after a long consultation between the mamma and the musical prodigy, and a prolonged hunt under the instrument for stray "pieces," that the performance commences.

You are then treated to the novelty of the "Huntsman's Chorus, with variations."

The evening's amusements are occasionally diversified by some recitations by Charles, including a remarkable speech from Douglas, which appears to begin with

"My name is Norval-on-the-Grampian-hills."

Polly's forte happily does not lie in the piano; but the dear child has a taste for drawing, and mamma immediately proposes a grand exhibition of juvenile works of art.

"Annie dear, do try and find that sweet little picture of a church, with birds flying and the man smoking a pipe—you know—which Polly did this morning on the slate—no—on the fly-leaf of Dr. Blair's Poems. I dare say it's somewhere—under the piano, or in the cupboard—or about—somewhere or other. You can't think how clever it is—so natural, too—the birds with their tails, and the man with his pipe, and the smoke coming out of it."

A long rummage ensues; and at length

the *chef-d'œuvre* is brought to light, and triumphantly displayed—the gifted artist standing by in an attitude of content, with her thumb in her mouth.

The above is a faithful copy of one of the pictorial efforts, unanimously pronounced to be "really very fair, and quite wonderful for a child of her age, and who has never had any instruction."

As bed-time arrives, each younger branch

of the family goes round, wishes each visitor good night, seriatim, and kisses him or her, as the case may be. Baby Bib and Petsey have, however, been consigned to their respective cribs about tea-time, and so mamma insists upon the ladies going up stairs "to see the lambs asleep."

This is the crowning outrage!

Oh babies, babies! how often have you revenged on us adults, that one little eccentricity—the Massacre of the Innocents!

CHAPTER VII

ON CERTAIN FEMININE BORES—THE "STRONG-MINDED WOMAN" BORE.

IN our last chapter we touched upon certain feminine characteristics, savouring strongly of Boredom. We have been thus led up by the very nature of our subject to the committal of that outrage upon gallantry implied in the heading of the present chapter. Were we merely a ladies' man inditing compliments to the sex, we could easily

have blinked this part of the subject; but in our character of a philosopher in search of truth, we have nothing for it but to speak out, and confess that there are Bores in petticoats as well as in pantaloons.

The "strong-minded woman," as typifying a class of intense Bores, and a class, too, unhappily very much upon the increase of late years, claims our first attentions—on paper. Sorry should we be to pay her any in reality.

The strong-minded woman is generally a spinster. If she be married, it is invariably to a husband the reverse of strong-minded. In nine cases out of ten she is a raw-boned, sinewy creature, designed after the scrag-of-mutton order of architecture. But she gives you to understand that she cares little about the mere outward envelope. It's the mind. That's the thing—the mind. The strong-minded woman is great upon the claims of her sex. According to her, all the rights of wo-

men have been converted by men into their wrongs. Her great point is, that the weaker vessel is not the weaker. Women have been trampled on. Let them assert their native dignity, and have meetings at the Crown and Anchor. The rights of woman! Down with the base usurper, man! Is not woman his equal? Of course she is. The "strong-minded" will demonstrate it to you, anatomically, physiologically, metaphysically, and historically.

The great peculiarity of the "strong-minded" ladies is that they are women, without the soft graces—the nameless magic of the sex. The very absence of woman's pretty silly whims, and foibles, and delightful little nonsensical, charming, absurd ways, leaves the void in the character of the "strong-minded," through which the heart of man tumbles, looking in vain for a resting-place and a home. For none is there—love can-

not harbour in so cold a clime. It is not in a crevice of the iceberg that the humming-bird builds its nest.

The "strong-minded" is occasionally a Blue —but in the severe and philosophical department. She affects the high mathematics, or talks about Fourier and communism; Malthus and the theory of population—and reads the Reports of the Statistical Society. The strong-minded is a keen politician. She defends the New Poor Law, and has occasionally views about the currency. She is of opinion that women should be eligible as members of the legislature, and would have no hesitation in undertaking the Lord Chancellorship herself. And the time for all this, she gives you to understand, will come. The world is not yet ripe; wait a little longer.

The strong-minded woman has odd, philosophical or unphilosophical (we don't say which) notions about marriage. She is always

terrifically indignant at what she calls "the miserable conventional usages of society." Somehow or other society, however, manages to get the better even of the "strong-minded."

We once knew a desperately strong-minded woman. She was a spinster of uncertain age, who had thought proper to write a book

upon the rearing of children. People laughed at the subject—she scorned the laughers. Unhappily the odds were all to one against her.

We found her once smoking a cigar, and we naturally enough looked somewhat surprised. The "strong-minded" saw it—

"You are astonished, of course. You stare as if I were committing an offence—am I? Here is the leaf of a plant rolled up; I apply fire to one end—it burns slowly. By the power of suction the smoke passes into my mouth; I puff it out,—that is all. What law, moral or material, forbids the practice? None? How have I then offended?"

"No; but," we stammered, "society——"

"There it is—society. Does nature curse what society bans? By what right does society impose restriction upon conduct prohibited neither by the moral nor the physical laws of the creation?"

What could we say? — nothing. What

could we do?—what we did. Marched off as soon and as quickly as possible. We have not seen the "strong-minded" since, and shall not break our heart if we never see her again.

Women, women, aspire not to boredom by the title of strong-minded. Be domestic, be loving, be gentle, be timid, be tender, be truthful. Seek not, for your own bright sakes, to barter the lustrous halo which plays about your natures, for that dry light of intellect which, like the misty beams of the moon, may mislead, but which cannot warm.

N.B. The husbands of strong-minded women frequently sup out.

CHAPTER VIII.

FEMININE BORES CONTINUED.

NDISPUTED Bore as the woman is who will talk a very great deal in support of by no means feminine views, there is an almost equal amount of unpleasantness about the woman who will

say nothing at all in support of any views whatever, masculine or feminine. And this species of Bore haunts every drawing-room, every ball-room; comes simpering, an insipid lump of pretty stupidity, into every dinner and tea party perpetrated in and out of the season.

The "silent woman" is generally represented by a young lady, not very long out. She is oftener pretty than ugly; for your really plain girls feel that, as their features say nothing for them, they must say something for their features. Hence they make a struggle to be agreeable. The tongue-tied, however, trusts to the passive charms of eyes which do not kindle, and lips which do not speak. The silent young lady is the most impracticable of creatures; you never interest her. Talk to her of a concert or of a battle, not a muscle of the pretty face stirs; it's all the same. And here it may be re-

marked that if you are not clever at mono-polylogue, a tête-à-tête with the tongue-tied young lady is a very dreadful thing.

Sometimes she is linked for the dreary length of a quadrille to a young gentleman of mild faculties and uncreative imagination

The struggle for something to say on the part of the male animal then becomes something tragic. It goes on in this style—

"Ah—ah—ahem. Fond of dancing?"

"Ye—ye—yes."

"Ah—so—ah—am I."

An awful pause, during which the young gentleman is torn with secret pangs, and looks with ferocious envy on his vis-à-vis and her partner rattling pleasantly away together. The silent young lady seems by no means put out, but dances on in a business like and meritorious manner. Fresh effort.

"Ah—ah—ahem—these rooms are—very hot."

"Ve—ve—very."

Longer pause than the first. Great and unsuccessful struggle for a new topic, during which the quadrille ends; the young gentleman deposits his partner on a chair, and

slinks into a quiet corner, where he smiles affably, and amuses himself by drawing on and off his gloves.

It is a very awful thing to be entrusted with the care of a silent young lady during dinner. Your perplexities commence with the soup. You determine to give her a chance—to try if any topic will act as a pick to the padlock of her lips. You start then from soup. Talking of soup sets you off on our friend Soyer, the most admirable of cooks, and the most genuine of good fellows. Soyer brings up the Reform Club—the Reform Club politics in general. Politics in general—say, Portuguese politics—Portuguese politics the Queen of Portugal. That royal lady leads to sweetmeats—sweetmeats to the Carnival—the Carnival to Italy—Italy to the fine arts—the fine arts to Landseer—Landseer to dogs—dogs to anecdotes of instinct—instinct to the dead elephant at the

Zoological—the defunct Jack to India—India to China—China to squeezing the ladies' feet—ladies' feet to ladies' hands—ladies' hands to hands in general—hands in general to Byron—Byron to Greece—and Greece to Egypt; so that by the time the fish is disposed of you are standing on the top of a pyramid, having started from the rim of a soup plate! But 'tis all in vain. Your eloquence has been merely interlarded here and there with a "Lor," or a "Yes," or a "Dear me," or—but that is a long flight—a feeble "You don't say so." You might as well have been talking to the plump cast of Joan of Arc, on which your eye is resting in despair. You give up the attempt.

The silent young lady is, of course, not absolutely dumb. She has, as we have hinted, two or three words, of which the principal are, "Yes," "No," "Lor," "How pretty," and "How shocking."

You say to her,

"You know the Fosters?"

"Ye—yes."

"I saw John Foster yesterday"—

"Lor."

"Dancing the college hornpipe on the top of Nelson's monument."

"Lor."

And both the "Lors" in precisely the same tone. For nothing appears to interest or to surprise the silent young lady. You cannot get up a sensation. She is impassible. How perfectly similar is the mode in which she says, "How pretty," when you talk of the new polka or the sunset you witnessed from Mont Blanc, to her style of lisping "How shocking," when you mention a blackbeetle or the earthquake at Lisbon.

All that can be said for her is, that like the

gold fish in the vase, she is pretty to look at, and harmless to touch

CHAPTER IX

FEMININE BORES CONTINUED—THE BLUE.

MISS LUCRETIA LUTESTRING—well known in the literary circles—is a "wild, impulsive, gushing thing" (see her "Ode on Maidenhood") of forty and some odd years. Her mission on earth is to "strike the yre of poësy"—a destiny which she fulfils by covering sheets of highly-scent

ed paper with multitudinous stanzas, traced in light blue ink by the gossamer touches of a crow-quill. Miss Lucretia Lutestring is somewhat of a fine woman run to seed. She gives her friends to understand that her intellect devours her. She is the very focus of consuming passion, and a species of rendezvous and house of call for blighted hopes and quenched aspirations. Miss Lutestring also states that she is "the Sappho of this northern clime," and has repeatedly affirmed in heroic, elegiac, Spenserian, and other stanzas, that her blood is not blood, but "lava"—a physiological fact, which induces us to breathe the sincere hope that the burning torrent may never escape in any species of cutaneous eruption. Miss Lucretia Lutestring, being by profession a poetess, is much given to contemplating the flies on the ceiling, rolling her eyes so that her friends dread that they may one day roll out of their sockets, and likewise to hitting herself desperate slaps on the forehead—all of which acts

she states to be symptomatic of a "wrapt soul drinking in the mysteries of nature's poësy, and yearning towards the abstractly beautiful, and the innately and eternally true."

Miss Lutestring takes poetic views of everything. She is very angry at the railroads, and declares that they have taken the romance out of the country—as if romance lay in rutty

roads, broad wheel wagons, and the capes of coachmen's coats. The world as it at present unhappily exists, she declares, is unworthy of the presence of a soul glowing with poetic fire. She would, an she could, frame it anew, and the following would be some of her materials—her chaos

Take of Silvery tones,
Fleeting spirits,
Airy voices,
Moonlight sleeping on banks,
Butterflies' wings,
Echoes,
Mermaids,
Sylphs,
Moonlit glades,
Fairy-like music,
Whispering willows,
Purling fountains,
Nodding forests,
Elfin revelry,
Clustering flowers,

And heaven knows how many similar ingredients—mix them well up together, and garnish with

Longing hopes,
Truthful aspirations,
Glowing vows,
And beating hearts.

The result will be a universe warranted correct, ideal, and fairy-like.

Miss Lucretia Lutestring is therefore a woman of mind—a creature whose soul soars above this dull globe, and its mouldy, dusty, cobwebby, and ignoble doings. In a word—her own—she is—

> " A thing of beauty, melody, and bliss,
> Borne upwards—on the incense of the lyre."

The " Thing of beauty" always has her hair in papers, and a hole in the heel of her stockings. Although aërial and elfin in her nature, she has been known to dine on beefsteaks, and sup on toasted cheese. It is a popular error to suppose that she drinks no-

thing but dew out of an acorn. The nearest approach she ever made to it was drinking "mountain dew" out of a dram glass. Miss Lutestring has little in common with the "strong minded woman," already satisfactorily disposed of. In some points, however, they coincide—as in utter and dense ignorance of those thousand homely duties and sweet household ministerings, which make the hearth, the altar, and the homestead, the temple of that glorious divinity—Domestic Love!

Miss Lucretia Lutestring

CAN	BUT SHE CANNOT
Write an ode,	Darn a stocking,
Or a sonnet,	Nor make a pudding,
Or a song of the fairies,	Nor go to market,
Or a chaunt of the mermaids,	Nor boil an egg,
Or a hymn to liberty,	Nor work a pair of slippers,
Or stanzas on a portrait,	Nor prattle loving nonsense,
Or lines on my uncle's birth-day,	Nor make the hearth tidy,
Or occasional verses,	Nor dandle a baby,
Or stanzas for music,	Nor carve a joint,
Or an epic poem,	Nor, alas! catch a husband.

Great — poetic — soaring—creative—then, as Miss Lucretia Lutestring's spirit may be, it wants those magic graces which convert woman's weakness into woman's strength. In her own sphere—by the hearth—in the home, she is naught. She may be clever, but, like many other clever people, she is—one of the "Bores."

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN-WITH-A-GRIEVANCE BORE.

There are some unhappy people in this world, who seem to be born martyrs as other folks are born geniuses. By their own accounts their mission on earth is to be trampled upon. Their whole lives are long martyrdoms—the universe has entered

into a conspiracy against them, and mankind in general are their oppressors and their foes. They have but one story to tell—of the ingratitude of their fellows. Every snake they take up becomes a viper and stings them—every man whom they shake hands with picks their pocket—every scheme they embark in is overturned by the villany of one of their most particular friends. If they lose a law-suit they will demonstrate that it was because the Judge had a private pique against them—if they get dismissed from a situation it was through the influence of a disgraceful back-stairs cabal, got up by the vilest of the human species.

One topic, and one topic of conversation only, does the grievance-mongering Bore possess—it is himself in connexion with his wrongs. On that point he will be eloquent for hours together. The ins and outs of his particular sorrows he will thread with unwearied diligence. He has always a long correspondence, or a bundle of memorials and

protests to show you, in proof of the foul injuries he has received from men whom he has cherished—from undertakings which he has set up. Sometimes he is indignant in his reproaches.

"These unfeeling scoundrels, sir; men who owe everything to me, their very bread, to use me so! But my time is coming—ha! ha!—let them look out. The day of retribution is near; and see if it will not be a black day for them!"

Occasionally the man with a grievance is meek and resigned, and narrates his wrongs with a pathetic submission. In this style—

"Yes, sir; that's the way the good Mr. Plumper has used me; I don't think it is what I deserved. However, I say nothing; I never do, I'm used to these things; all I know is, that *I* could not have treated Plumper's *dog* as Plumper has treated me."

Artists and actors are generally very great in the grievance line. The former gentle-

men have perpetually endless stories of the jealousies and the intrigues of the Academy and the dozen or so of artistic institutions in the metropolis to regale you with. The rejection of a picture at an exhibition is a text from which a whole course of grievance-sermons can be triumphantly preached.

But the wrongs of artists sink into comparative insignificance, compared with the atrocity of the wrongs of actors. Our friend Edmund Kean Garrick Walsingham, for instance, is a walking gentleman. He is always being kept down by tyrannical managers and base plots of the "profession." He aspires to tragedy; he has a great notion of the hit he would make in "Lear," but unhappily all the "business" he gets is that of the lovers in farces, who wear white ducks and have arbitrary uncles.

The Bore of grievance-mongering is no unfrequently hereditary. There are family grievances as well as individual wrongs—

grievances which do not decay, but become rich, and mellowed, and full-grown in the memory of their depositories.

We once knew an old man of seedy apparel, and bleared eyes, and skinny, shaking hands. He was a lone, friendless, helpless, half-crazy old man, yet he was a Bore. He would sit muttering to himself, and sunning himself all day on a bench in the Park, reading, and collating, and arranging over and over again, worn, stained, and tattered documents, some printed, others written, every word of which, God help him, he had had by heart, years, and tens, and twenties of years ago. They were the statement, and the proofs of his grievance — his great family grievance, his hereditary wrong. If he saw you glance at them he would at once attack you. You must hear the whole story—the ingratitude of great men—the tardiness of justice—the apathy of governments—the ruin of his House. Then, how the claim originated—how his

grandfather prosecuted it under the second George, his father under the Third, himself under the Fourth, and down to the present day — and what are his hopes and his prospects—and what lawyers had given opinions —and what members of Parliament had promised support—and what the decisions on similar points of law had been—and how high were his hopes—how confident his expectations, that this long, long pending contest was

now nearly at a close, and that in six months he would be rolling on gold.

Bore, intense Bore, as the man was, he was yet a Bore to bear with and to pity.

We did not lose sight of him. From time to time, he got petitions presented to Parliament. They were duly laid on the table—duly pitched under it—duly carried off in a carpet bag, for all we know, to light Bellamy's kitchen ranges. For years and years, in Parliament, after Parliament, he had been struggling to procure a discussion on his case. He could never bring sufficient influence to bear. Often it was promised, as often was the promise evaded. Now it was the break up of a ministry—now the pressure of public business; again, the rancour of party debate. There was always something which came between him and his parliamentary hearing. By dint of constantly agitating the subject—constantly pondering it, he had worked his half-crazed mind up to believe that a speech in

Parliament on his behalf and success were the same thing. Judge, then, how he toiled for it; and judge his glory, when, by a most fortunate combination of circumstances, the darling wish of his heart was on the eve of being granted. We saw him mount the gallery stairs, his features strained and his eye kindled. We saw him hang on every word which escaped the speaker's mouth; words so familiar since childhood to his own ear. With every faculty riveted upon his advocate, he saw not the gradual desertion of the House, nor the languid air of the few who still lounged upon the almost empty benches. Suddenly, a member rose—he was a gay young man—who had betted a couple of ponies that he would count the House out a dozen times between Easter and Whitsuntide. He moved that the speaker do count the House. In another moment the debate was broken up, the subject dismissed for ever. The old man staggered wildly towards the

members' door of exit. The gentleman who had counted out the House came laughingly by. The old man would have flown on him, but the by-standers restrained him. They tried to soothe him, and then they led him home foaming at the mouth.

Next day a policeman, who was called in, found him in bed, cold and dead, with the tattered papers in his hand.

CHAPTER XI

THE COUNTRY ACQUAINTANCE BORE.

THE Londoner, the man absorbed in business, the merchant, the barrister, the artist, the author, knows well what it is to receive, per bearer, some fine morning in the height of the season, an epistle, couched somewhat as follows :—

Muddledub, 18th June, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—Presuming upon my slight *but pleasant* acquaintance with you, you will remember under what circumstances contracted, and calling to mind that you assured me, just before we parted at Vauxhall, at four o'clock *that* morning, how happy you would be to do me a good turn, I have taken the liberty of recommending to your good offices my friend and neighbour, John Grublings, who goes up to see the wonders of the *great metropolis*. John is a remarkably steady and amiable young man. This is his first trip from home, and I need not say how grateful he will be for your kindness in showing him the *lions*, than whom there is *none* more fit to do it. With kind remembrances,

Yours, very faithfully,

JAMES JONES SMITH.

P.S.—If you should not be able to give up John a few days, perhaps you would just put him in the way of seeing everything; get

him orders for all the theatres, &c., and give him letters to those of your friends, whose acquaintanceship, you think, would most please and *improve* a young man.

J. J. S.

"With best wishes, and in which Mrs. J. J. S. joins."

Under such circumstances, three courses are, as Sir Robert would say, open for you to pursue. If you have the adroitness to do it, you will send Mr. Grublings adrift again, with vague and undefined promises of meeting him, Heaven knows when and Heaven knows where. If you have the heart and the brass to do it, you will gallop him about London in a cab, showing him Guy's Hospital as Buckingham Palace, Exeter Hall as the Coalhole, Hyde Park as Bethnal Green, and the Serpentine as the Thames. But the probability is, that for one day at least you will make up your mind to act as showman to the provincial. You therefore make an appointment for nine o'clock

next morning, and if in the interim he be not engaged with the police in running after a tavern acquaintance who has managed to strip him to the last sovereign,

while philanthropically putting his purse into his fob so as to guard against the dishonesty of London sharpers, your country friend will be punctual to a minute.

Then comes the dreary round of sight-seeing. First, St. Paul's—must go up to the cross. No one in Muddledub would believe that he had been in London if he did not go up St. Paul's. Down again—read all the inscriptions—look at Post Office—peep into Bank—up the Monument—down again—off to the Tower—cab crushed in Thames-street between two wagons—arrive—you pay the fees—regalia—horse armoury—only the seventy-ninth time you have seen them—up to west-end in a steamer. Look in *en passant* a moment at your rooms—hear that a manager called in a great hurry about a new piece, but not finding you, bolted off to a rival dramatist—would not have been out of the way for a thousand pounds. Go on in an atrocious humour—meet three literary friends—hear

of a re-union of contributors to one of the magazines you write for, at the Star and Garter—would give the world to be there—can't bring Grublings, and can't shake him off. —More sights — Duke of York's column. Grublings will go up, and lug you after him. The Park—see Miss Polkington walking alone —such a chance—no use—chained to Grublings. Point out all the clubs—toil up Regent-street — totter down Oxford-street — pant through Bond-street—stagger back by Piccadilly—down to the Houses of Parliament—stand there an hour, amid ragamuffins, policemen, and grooms, pointing out the members to Grublings — show Westminster Abbey—all the inscriptions and all the tombs. Dinner at last, at Grublings' hotel—Grublings having ordered it. Huge lump of boiled beef and carrots in a steaming coffee-room, with thermometer at 90—you think of the balmy terraces of the Star and Garter, and sigh. Dinner over—that is to say, the beef bolted—Grub-

lings proposes to look in at one or two of the theatres. The sacrifice must be made—try the Princess's—black hole of Calcutta a joke to it—Grublings in tears at the "Stranger" —propose the Haymarket in the hopes of something lively, and come in for two acts of a legitimate comedy—a great deal more dismal than the tragedy. By this time you are awfully knocked up—head and heart aching together—Grublings has set his heart on Evans' —you enter more dead than alive. Nothing to be seen for the first five minutes in the dense tobacco cloud. As it clears, a horrid vision of smoking kidneys, Welsh rabbits, goblets of stout, and gents. in flaring stocks and dirty kids. Grublings convivial—encores comic song—you nudge him to come away—he won't hear of it. Has five goes of brandy and six cheroots—offers to stand champagne, and volunteers a recitation. Being in vain warned, is at length forcibly ejected. You presently follow, laughing in your sleeve.

Your revenge is not yet complete. On emerging under the piazzas you find Grublings squabbling with policeman; you stand aside, and in five minutes make one of a curious crowd who follow the provincial to the station, he being in close custody for being drunk and disorderly, and assaulting the police in the execution of their duty. Grublings is locked up. You wend your way homewards rejoicing, and go to bed happier than you could have anticipated.

But the Grublings' nightmare is not yet over. At four o'clock you are knocked up by a policeman, who performs a vigorous solo on the knocker.

"Hillo! hillo! what is the matter? is the house on fire?"

"No, sir; but I called from the station in Bow-street to ask you to bail a gent. as is locked up for being lushy and obstropulous. Here's his card. Grublings."

Now for vengeance.

"Grublings—don't know him—cursed impertinence—to knock a gentleman up for any drunken humbug of the kind. Be off."

Down goes your window—off goes the policeman, and in that interview you hear the last of the justly punished "Bore from the Country."

CHAPTER XII.

ON SOME THEATRICAL BORES.

You are sitting in the first circle of —say the Haymarket Theatre. Behind you is a squab-nosed, vacant-faced little man, intently studying the play-bill, and occasionally gazing with a vapid stare round the house. Presently the orchestra strikes up.

"What music is that, if you please, sir?" says the insipid little man.

You look with astonishment at the being who does not recognise those short preliminary rolls of the drum, and say—

"The overture to Fra Diavolo."

"Thank you, sir."

The curtain rises. Enter Farren. "I beg your pardon, sir, but is not that Mr. Buckstone?"

You put the questioner right. In a few minutes, if the piece be not a fine old comedy, comes a joke and a laugh.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but what was that they laughed at? I did not catch it."

You repeat the point somewhat impatiently.

"Ah! I see; that lady there is Miss Julia Bennett, I believe?"

It is Mrs. Glover, and you say so; the information acknowledged by the same stolid "Thank you, sir." The act drop down, you receive the following modest request—

"I beg pardon, sir, but I do not quite understand the plot. Why does Sir John want to marry his daughter to Mogrum, and what was in the letter that Flounce brought to Miss Emmeline? I could not hear myself."

As may be supposed, you move, with some precipitation, to another part of the house. This species of Bore—the know-nothing, understand-nothing Bore — swarms in London while the railway witnesses are up.

Another sort of Bore, just as tiresome and more offensive, haunts the upper boxes at half price. The creatures make their appearance in threes and fours, and their peculiarity consists in talking rapid slangy nonsense to each other, as loud as the actors on the stage. To those in their neighbourhood, therefore, the play appears to run after this fashion.

Broken-Hearted Father.—"My child, my child—oh that my old arm had still the might to——"

FIRST BORE.—"Spar the Bloomsbury Pet—indeed! He'd knock you into the middle of next——"

WEEPING HEROINE.—"Hush—I know not—it seems a dream—a long, dark, horrid——"

SECOND BORE.—"Shoulder of mutton and trimmings, and the Knobbler won——"

MAN IN FIRST ROW.—"Silence behind there—shame!"

BROKEN-HEARTED FATHER.—"But the villain—the double-dyed villain, who——"

THIRD BORE.—"Had three stouts and five goes of grog—so woke precious headachy in——"

WEEPING HEROINE.—"The sunshine of a young and joyous spirit. But listen——"

FIRST BORE.—"That's her—next to the pillar—Saw her at Cremorne——"

BROKEN-HEARTED FATHER.—"That the curses of an injured old man may——"

SECOND BORE. — "Follow her into a Bus——"

MAN IN FRONT.—"Si—lence!"

WEEPING HEROINE.—"Hush—hush, for heaven's sake—but tell me——"

FIRST BORE.—"In a Hansom—of course."

BROKEN-HEARTED FATHER.—"No—no—your sainted mother——"

THIRD BORE.—"Took in washing—nonsense!"

WEEPING HEROINE.—"Alas, yes—his vows were——"

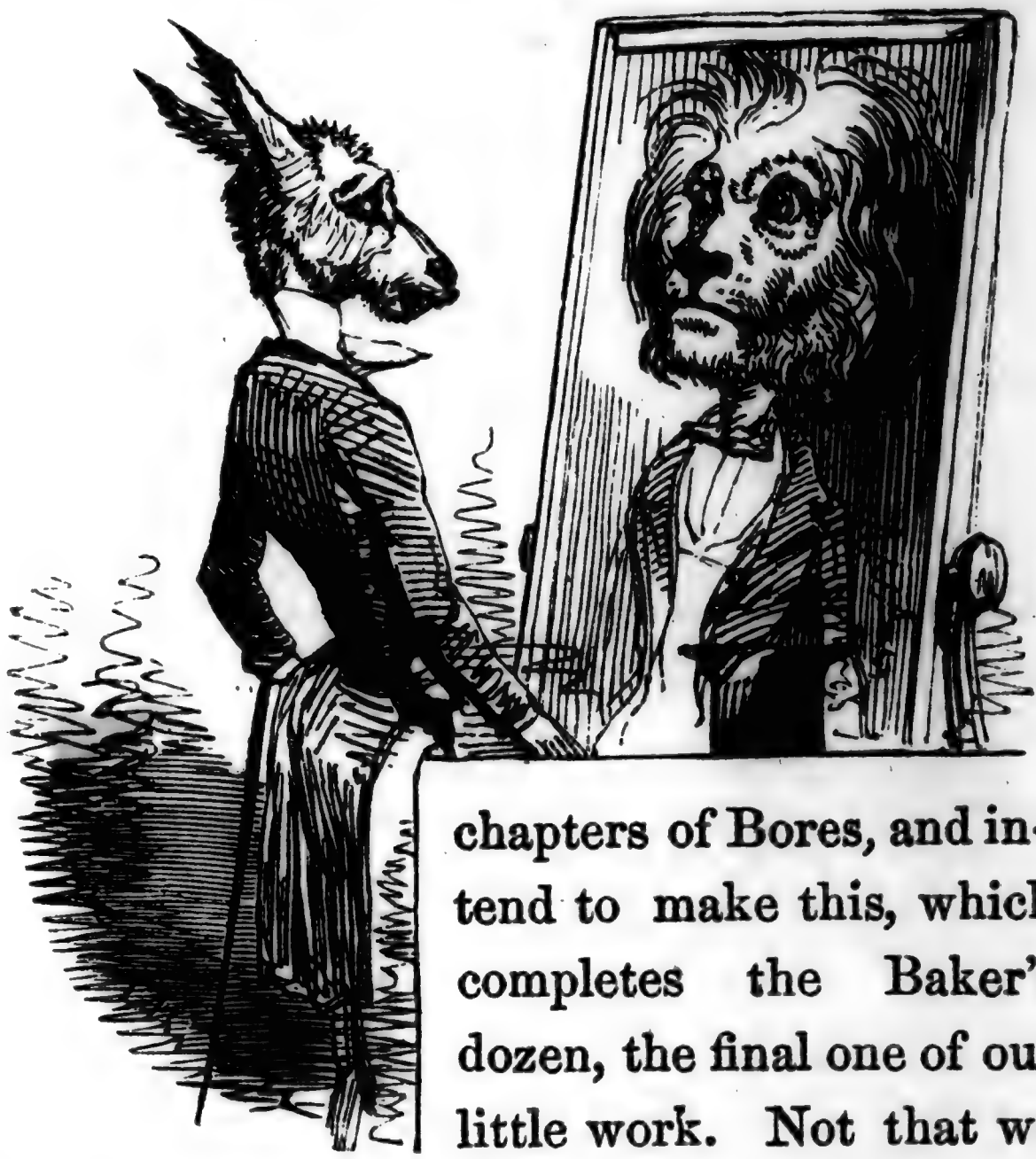
FIRST BORE.—"Bosh—a regular sell."

And so on through the act—to the great improvement of the drama, and the edification of the audience.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND LAST.

We have chatted through twelve



chapters of Bores, and intend to make this, which completes the Baker's dozen, the final one of our little work. Not that we mean, for a moment, to say that we have exhausted all the realms of Boreism. They are

too vast—too multitudinous. But we have indicated some of the principal specimens of the race—have sketched some of their most striking qualities and characteristics. A crowd of minor Bores are still in waiting—but they must be passed by, so to speak, with a word and a blow. We have heard of a German tale, called a "story without an end," and truly this treatise would be so in fact, if not in name, were we minutely to analyse the manners and customs of every two-legged unfeathered animal, who could be proved a Bore.

Let us just glance, then, at a few of the more conspicuous of the remaining specimens of Boredom. There is the nice young man Bore; the mildly insipid youth who, when he was a boy, used to help his sisters to dress dolls, and who, now that he is legally a man, knows no more of the world which is hurrying on about him than if he were only occasionally brought out—a gigantic baby over twenty in a go-cart. His amusements are, as might be ex-

pected, of a singularly milk-and-water character. He frequents lectures on China and the culture of the tea plant, or on the entomology of Japan. He is also addicted to escorting old ladies to negro educational meetings at Exeter Hall. In wet weather he pa-

tronises numerous ingenious pedal inventions designed to enable him to set the mud at defiance, and believes that one of the great ends

of his existence is to keep his feet dry. He seldom goes to a theatre—not much approving of such places of amusement. Indeed, he was only in Drury-lane and the Adelphi once; at the former on the occasion of an anti-corn law meeting, and at the latter to see Mr. Adams' orrery, with which he described himself as having been much gratified. Furthermore, though the nice young man generally grows up a spiritless, uninteresting old fogy, he seldom or never commits himself, leads as harmless a life as an oyster, and pays the debt of nature at last, without having done one disgraceful action, but without having ever experienced one kindling idea, or spoken one bold or novel word.

Indian Bores are not uncommon in society, in the shape of lean, bilious gentlemen, with unmanageable livers. These are the people who, in their conversation, pelt you so unmercifully with bungalows, tiffins, dawks, subadars, bangamarees, bangfuttypores, and the rest of the Indian vocabulary. They are full

of talk as to the relative healthiness of stations and the luxury of punkahs, seasoned with full, true, and particular accounts of the thirteen alligators which Wiggins of the 199th killed in the ditch at Mysore, and the desperate conflict waged single-handed by Supkins, a civilian, against nine Thugs in a jungle, where he had gone to hunt boa constrictors in a ghaut on the Indus.

Bores, too—immeasurable Bores—are literary men when they insist on reading their MS. to their friends. On these occasions

their pertinacity—their awful determination to bring about a first reading—perhaps the first and the last ever to be obtained by the work—is something incredible. Johnson must have suffered deeply from this species of Bore, when, on observing what a showman would call "a literary man of the period" slowly and insidiously producing a manuscript, the lexicographer jumped up, and with a shout which sent Boswell quaking into a corner, roared, "At your peril, sir. At your peril!"

We know one illustrative story. It is worth a wilderness of description.

A man was dying—he had a friend, an author. The friend came to see him. To comfort him? No; to read MS.

He produced a packet, and drew in his chair to the bedside of the moribund. "Only a few chapters," he said, insinuatingly.

"But, my dear friend," urged the faint voice of the departing, "the doctor says I've only half an hour to live."

What was the reply?

"Yes—yes—I know all that—but this will only take you twenty minutes!"

An undoubted Bore is the man who talks "shop." Medical students are much given to it. They will expatiate over soup on the extraction of a cancer—change the subject to lithotomy with the fish—offer to illustrate the single flap operation practically upon the joint—and wind up with a dissertation on a lovely case of tumour at Guy's, apropos of

rhubarb-pie and cream. Stock-Exchange men, we regret to say, are much given to similar unsociable practices. We dined the other day with a party, where not one word was spoken but about "Great Northerns, Birmingham and Oxfords, Great North of Spain's—rigging the market, premiums, discounts, scrip, allotments, and Woolmer *v.* Toby."

But we will not pursue the great Ragman's roll of Boredom further. The number of its names is legion. Why, at this instant, we are persecuted by Bores. Our landlady, contrary to all the acknowledged duties of woman, whereof the chief undoubtedly is, looking after the prandial meal of the lord of the creation, is boreing us to choose what we shall have for dinner. A well meaning but dismally minded friend, is informing us that we never looked half so ill in our life, and that we ought, seriously, to "do something—give up work and go to the sea-side for a month." A letter, from a fidgetty editor of a magazine,

who is always afraid of being too late, inquiring, in italics, whether "I am or am not to have copy," is open before us. A grumbling gentleman, an actor, is just whispering through the penny post, that he must throw up a part we had written for him, unless it be strengthened, and a song put in at rehearsal. An idle scamp of a friend has dropped in to have a gossip, and won't take a hint to drop out. The lady down stairs who is learning the pianoforte is thumping away at the gamut—like a man running up and down a musical flight of stairs. The young gentleman who is imbibing instruction on the cornet-à-piston in the attic, has just begun, "In a cottage near a wood," with a break down at every third note; while a thrice-banned Italian in the street is churning the "Post-horn gallop" at psalm time.

Can we then write further of Bores? You might as well expect a man stretched on the

rack to pen a complacent history of the theory and practice of torturing.

But we will be resigned. Bores were, are, and will be. We have done our part, in so far showing up the most obnoxious members of the order. Yet will the great brotherhood of Bores not hate us.

You doubt it?

"Sir or Madam,—we know human nature better. See here: we question this gentleman, who thinks of demanding satisfaction from us."

"You hate us—?"

"Yes."

"Because we have abused you?"

"Yes."

"But we have only abused Bores; therefore, if you hate us, by your own showing, you are a Bore."

See—not a word has the crestfallen hero to say.

Depend upon it, it is ever so. No man, woman, or child, thinks himself, herself, or itself a Bore. When they read a fulmination against Bores, they never dream of including themselves. They are in the right.

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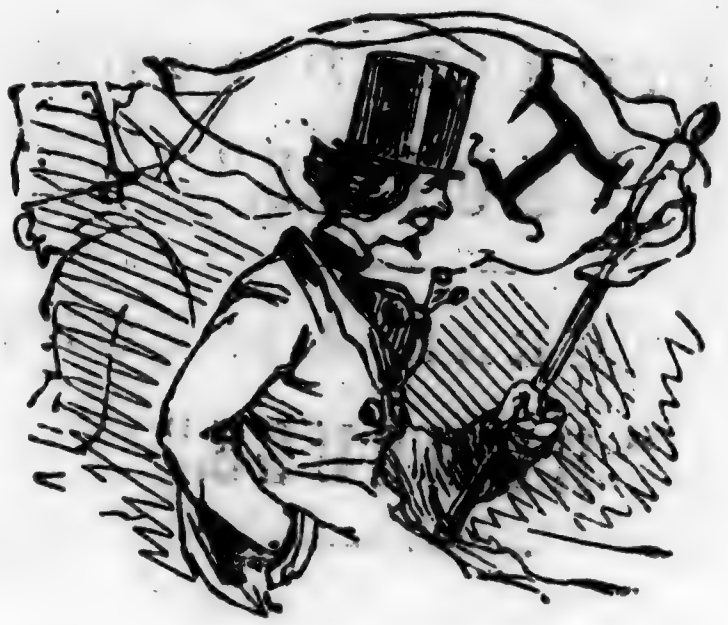

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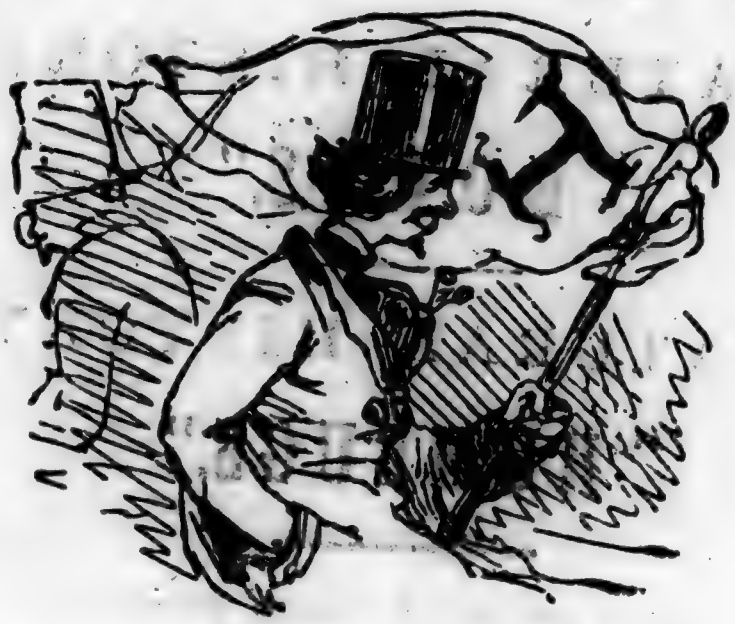

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